Bee City Action Plan

Updated May 28, 2025

TOWN OF COMOX

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Introduction

Pollinators, including native bees, butterflies, and other insects, are necessary for healthy ecosystems and local food systems. They play a key role in the reproduction of flowering plants and contribute to broader biodiversity and climate resilience. Bee City Canada is a national program that recognizes municipalities committed to protecting pollinators through habitat creation, education, and celebration. These three pillars form the foundation of each Bee City designation and guide local actions to support pollinator health.

Comox has integrated pollinator protection into its broader commitments to biodiversity, climate action, and sustainable land management. The Town's decision to pursue a Bee City designation was identified as an action item in its Climate Action Plan and Risk Assessment and aligns with its goals to enhance ecological resilience and community engagement.

The Town of Comox is committed to supporting native pollinators and enhancing biodiversity through the Bee City designation. This Action Plan outlines short, medium, and long-term actions the Town will undertake or explore to support pollinator habitat, education, and celebration.

This plan builds on Comox's existing environmental leadership and community partnerships and also reflects the Town's ongoing efforts to integrate pollinator-friendly practices into municipal landscapes, public education, and operational standards. By advancing these initiatives through a coordinated and scalable approach, the Town aims to strengthen its contribution to regional ecological health while engaging residents in meaningful and accessible ways.

Current Actions That Align with Bee City Principles

Table 1 summarizes the ongoing actions that align with the habitat creation and enhancement, education, and celebration Bee City Pillars. Habitat creation and enhancement efforts include pollinator-specific gardens at Marina Park and Filberg Park, both designed with native and non-native plantings that support a range of pollinating species. Filberg Park is also certified as a wildlife-friendly habitat and features additional elements such as , nesting features, and pesticide-free maintenance practices. The Town's Invasive Species Management Plan and annual community cleanup events further support habitat health and restoration.

From a policy perspective, Comox has embedded pollinator considerations in key documents such as the Climate Resilient Landscaping Standards (2023) and the 2025 Draft Standard Design Specifications, both of which promote native planting, seasonal bloom diversity, and reduced mowing practices. The Pesticide Use Bylaw (No. 1527) has long restricted cosmetic pesticide use, providing early leadership in chemical reduction.

Education and public engagement are well established through a range of tools and events. The Town maintains a pollinator-focused webpage and provides a practical gardening brochure for residents. Staff promote pollinator-friendly practices during seasonal events such as Earth Day and World Bee Day, and the 2024 Pollinator Week celebration included family programming, seed giveaways, and educational booths. The Town also benefits from internal capacity, with three Parks staff certified as Pollinator Stewards through Pollinator Partnership.

Several ongoing or in-development initiatives, including the Urban Forest Strategy, Bird Friendly City efforts, and participation in the Butterflyway Project, further reflect the Town's broader commitment to biodiversity and offer multiple touchpoints to support native pollinators.

Table 1 - Existing initiatives that support pollinators.

Initiative	Description	Bee City Pillar	Lead / Partners
Marina Park Pollinator Garden	Native and ornamental plants installed to support butterflies and bees.	Habitat	Town of Comox
Filberg Park Pollinator and Wildlife Habitat	Certified wildlife-friendly site with pollinator beds, mason bee houses, native plantings, wildlife trees, and Pollinator Week events; no pesticide use.	Habitat / Education	Town of Comox/ Filberg Heritage Lodge and Park
Pesticide Use Bylaw (No. 1527, 2006)	Bans non-essential cosmetic pesticides on lawns and gardens. Reduces risk to pollinators.	Habitat	Town of Comox
Invasive Species Management	The Town implements an Invasive Species Management Plan and hosts removal events to restore habitat. These efforts improve	Habitat/Education	Town of Comox/ volunteers

Initiative	Description	Bee City Pillar	Lead / Partners
	conditions for native pollinator plants and offer public education on invasive species impacts		
Supporting Pollinators Webpage	Educational content on native gardening, pesticide alternatives, overwintering habitat, and invasive plant removal.	Education	Town of Comox
Pollinator Gardening Brochure	"6 How-to Steps for a Pollinator-Friendly Garden" guide for residents (Appendix A).	Education	Town of Comox
Pollinator Week 2023 and 2024 Events	Hosted at Filberg Park with seed giveaways, scavenger hunt, children's activities, and gardening info booths.	Education / Celebration	Town of Comox / Local Volunteers
World Bee Day Promotion (May 20)	Online education and awareness about native bee support and pollinator-friendly gardening.	Education / Celebration	Town of Comox
Earth Day Promotion (April 22)	The Town regularly promotes Earth Day through events and communications, providing opportunities to highlight pollinator-friendly practices.	Education / Celebration	Town of Comox / Community Partners
Bat Friendly Community Designation (2023)	Public bat talks, habitat enhancements, and awareness tied to pesticide reduction and native planting.	Habitat / Education	BC Community Bat Program / Town
Bird Friendly City (in progress)	Includes native plant and invasive species actions that also benefit pollinators; part of larger biodiversity strategy.	Habitat / Education	Comox Valley Nature / Town of Comox/Bird Friendly Comox
Butterflyway (David Suzuki Foundation)	Comox is listed on the David Suzuki Foundation's Butterflyway Project map. Native wildflower beds installed by residents and the Town support butterflies and	Habitat/Education	Town of Comox/Local Residents

Initiative	Description	Bee City Pillar	Lead / Partners
	native pollinators throughout the community.		
Climate Action Plan (2024)	The plan supports nature-based solutions and biodiversity by including actions related to habitat restoration and pollinators.	Habitat/Education	Town of Comox
Standard Design Specifications (2025 Draft)	Includes provisions for native, drought tolerant, and pollinator friendly landscapes	Habitat	Town of Comox
Climate Resilient Landscaping Standards	Town standards promote pollinator-friendly design including native plants, seasonal bloom planning, and habitat features like bare soil and leaf litter.	Habitat/Education	Town of Comox
Pollinator Steward Certification (Staff)	Three Parks staff have received Pollinator Steward certification, enhancing internal capacity to support pollinator initiatives.	Education	Town of Comox
Urban Forest Strategy (in progress)	Strategy under development that aims to support native trees, biodiversity, and ecological connectivity, aligning with pollinator habitat objectives.	Habitat/Education	Town of Comox
Parks and Trails Master Plan	Supports use of the Climate Resilient Landscaping Standards to guide selection of drought-tolerant, native, and climate-adapted species as part of broader climate resilience and environmental stewardship goals.	Habitat	Town of Comox

Advancing the Bee City Canada Commitment

The Town of Comox's pollinator action plan is organized by the three Bee City Canada pillars and reflects a combination of short-term initiatives, ongoing programming, and medium-term opportunities to embed pollinator-friendly practices into Town operations and partnerships. The plan is intended to be practical, scalable, and adaptable, with actions pursued in alignment with available resources, community input, and emerging

opportunities. The tables below outline initiatives the Town may implement, as resources permit, in support of its Bee City certification commitment.

Table 2 - Habitat Creation and Enhancement

Initiative	Description	Lead / Partners	Timeline	Cost
Annual Pollinator Bed Program	Develop a pollinator habitat asset layer and identify opportunities to establish or retrofit 2 pollinator-friendly planting beds per year in public spaces.	Town of Comox	Annual	$$
No Mow Zone Sign Pilot	Trial signage in parks to support early-season forage and promote reduced mowing practices.	Town of Comox	Short-term	$
Embedding Pollinator Support in Municipal Processes	As new planning documents, policies, strategies, or bylaws are introduced or updated, review them for opportunities to integrate pollinator-friendly practices	Planning / Parks / Bylaw	Medium-term	$

Table 3 - Education and Awareness

Initiative	Description	Lead / Partners	Timeline	Cost
Pollinator Week Library Partnership	Library-based display, storytime sessions, or activities during Pollinator Week.	Library / Town	Annual	$
Marina Park Week Event	Co-host event at Comox's premier park during pollinator week.	Comox BIA / Town	Annual	$

Initiative	Description	Lead / Partners	Timeline	Cost
Temporary Interpretive Signage	Install signs near habitat sites to explain ecological value and pollinator roles.	Town / Filberg Park	Short-term	$
“Pollinators of Comox” Info Poster	Visual display featuring local pollinator species in civic spaces.	Town / CV Nature	Short-term	$
Community Gardening Talk	Host a seasonal workshop on pollinator-friendly gardening.	Hort Society / Town	Annual	$
Seed Library Pop-Up	Offer free native seeds and resources via a temporary or library-based seed library.	Town / Library / Partners	Annual	$
Pollinator Passport	Create a bingo-style activity for kids to spot pollinators and plants in parks.	Town of Comox	Short-term	$
Cross-Promotion with Bird / Bat Programs	Share educational messages across Bird Friendly and Bat Week campaigns.	Town / CVN / BC Bat Program	Annual	$

Table 4 - Celebration

Initiative	Description	Lead / Partners	Timeline	Cost
Pollinator Art or Poster Contest	Invite students to submit art celebrating pollinators for display at civic locations.	Town / Library / Schools	Annual	$
Pollinator Poetry Path	Feature resident-submitted poems in pollinator gardens during Pollinator Week.	Town / Library	Annual	$

Initiative	Description	Lead / Partners	Timeline	Cost
Scavenger Hunt at Filberg Park	Seasonal family-friendly activity with pollinator clues and educational stops.	Town / Filberg Park Association	Annual	$
Social Media Garden Spotlights	Highlight pollinator-friendly gardens on Town media channels.	Town of Comox	Annual	$

Year 1 Implementation Plan

Implementation of this action plan will focus on initiatives that can be delivered through existing staff capacity and community partnerships. Short-term efforts will prioritize public education and simple habitat enhancements that build visibility and engagement. Medium-term actions will begin to integrate pollinator considerations into policies and operations; while recurring annual initiatives will maintain momentum and reinforce the Town's Bee City commitments. By pacing activities across different timeframes and leveraging partnerships, the Town will strive to make steady progress without requiring significant new resources.

In Year 1, the Town will focus on expanding pollinator activities through new partnerships, habitat improvements, and public education, with implementation tailored to capacity and opportunity. Key actions are expected to include supporting the work of the Pollinator Team, developing new or retrofitting two pollinator beds, and installing interpretive signage at existing garden sites. The Town will also explore partnership with the Comox Library to deliver Pollinator Week programming, including a StoryWalk and seed library pop-up. Educational tools such as the "Pollinators of Comox" info poster and Pollinator Passport may also be developed.

Pollinator Week will serve as a focal point for community engagement, supported by art and poetry activities, garden events, and digital outreach. Through summer and fall, efforts will shift to maintenance, content development, and reviewing early outcomes of pilot initiatives such as the No Mow Zone. Throughout the year, pollinator messaging will be integrated into Bird and Bat Friendly campaigns, and a pollinator lens will be applied to relevant bylaw and policy updates.

Table 5 - Year 1 timeline and activities

Season	Planned Activities
Winter (Jan–Mar)	Pollinator Team Meeting. Confirm timelines and responsibilities for Year 1 actions. Develop a "Pollinators of Comox" Info Poster/Graphic. Begin drafting content for interpretive signage and Pollinator Passport.
Spring (Apr–Jun)	Plan and design two Pollinator Beds for spring installation. Promote Earth Day (April 22) with pollinator-friendly gardening content. Launch No Mow Zone Pilot in designated parks. Install new interpretive signage near existing beds. Launch Seed Library Pop-Up at Library or Farmers' Market. Host Community Gardening Talk (spring edition). Run Pollinator Art or Poster Contest.
Celebrate Pollinator Week (June 16–22)	Event at Marina Park. Storytime/StoryWalk at Library. Pollinator Poetry Path. Social media spotlights on local gardens and Town-led efforts.
Summer (Jul–Aug)	Maintain new pollinator beds and monitor plant health. Continue public education via social media spotlights. Prepare seasonal planting tip content for newsletter or online.
Fall (Sep–Nov)	Host second Community Gardening Talk (optional). Promote native planting and seed collection tips. Refill or rotate Seed Library with fall-suitable species. Finalize Pollinator Passport content and print for spring launch. Review early outcomes from No Mow Zone and signage pilot. Coordinate with Bat Week outreach (late October).
Year Round	Integrate pollinator content into Bird/Bat Friendly campaigns. Share seasonal garden updates through social media. Meet as needed with the Pollinator Team to track progress. As new bylaws, policies, or strategies are developed or updated, assess potential impacts on pollinators and identify opportunities to enhance habitat, forage resources, or support ecological landscaping.

Monitoring and Reporting

Progress will be monitored through regular team check-ins, updates from relevant departments, and documentation of activities aligned with the three Bee City pillars. Each initiative will be recorded using the annual reporting template provided in Appendix B. This template captures key details such as project descriptions, timelines, community participation, and outcomes. Staff will also collect photographs,

communication materials, and partner feedback to support both internal evaluation and public reporting.

The completed annual report will be submitted to Bee City Canada as part of the required renewal process and shared with Council to maintain transparency and highlight achievements. Where feasible, updates and highlights will also be communicated to the public through the Town's website and other communication channels. This approach ensures that pollinator protection efforts remain visible, accountable, and responsive to evolving needs.

Review and Adaptation

Staff will revisit this Action Plan annually to assess progress, adapt timelines, and update commitments based on community feedback, staff capacity, and new opportunities. Progress will be reported through the reporting template in Appendix B and the Bee City Canada's annual renewal process.

Concluding Statement

The Town of Comox's commitment to pollinator health reflects a broader dedication to ecological stewardship, climate resilience, and community well-being. This action plan outlines a practical and flexible approach to advancing Bee City Canada's three pillars (habitat creation, education, and celebration) through municipal leadership and collaboration. By pursuing these initiatives as resources and opportunities allow, the Town will continue to build a pollinator-friendly community that supports biodiversity and engages residents in meaningful ways.

Appendix A – Pollinator Plants Brochure

THE BUZZ ON HONEYBEES

Honeybees are not native; they were brought to North America by European settlers and have been managed for use in the agricultural industry. Honeybees are highly social, live in hives with a queen, and produce honey.
Although Honeybees are facing challenges including habitat loss, pesticide use, impacts from mites and colony collapse disorder, they are not at risk of extinction. Keeping honeybees in your backyard will not help to save the native bees and some studies are showing that honeybees may be contributing to the decline in native bee populations.

There are over 400 native bee species in BC; most native bees are solitary, and although they may nest in close proximity to one another, each female is responsible for her own nest and offspring. They make their homes in underground tunnels, in hollow stems or in cavities of dead wood, without a hive to protect native bees are generally very docile and will rarely sting. Bumblebees are the exception; they form small nests with one queen and even produce small amounts of honey for their own use. They may sting but only if the nest is disturbed or if they are accidentally stepped upon.

THE SCOOP ON MONARCH'S

Our large native Swallowtail butterflies are often mistaken for monarch butterflies but Monarch butterflies and Milkweed are not native to Vancouver Island, we have the occasional monarch sightings on the island but they do not breed here so the campaigns to plant milkweed to save the butterflies is not beneficial here and could potentially even be harmful to our ecosystem. But don't worry! There's plenty of other butterfly species native to our area that you can help.

There are approximately 70 butterfly species native to Vancouver Island and most of them spend their entire lifecycle here even overwintering as eggs, larvae, pupae or adults. Butterflies are generalist feeds and will feed on nectar from a wide variety of plants but they will only lay their eggs on a select few host plants. In order to have a successful butterfly garden a variety of native host and nectar plants need to be incorporated into your garden.

Here's a few examples of native plants you can add to your garden to attract bees and butterflies:

Native host plants	Native nectar plants
StingingNettle	Goldenrod
Oceanspray	Woolly Sunflower
Pearly Everlasting	Gumweed
Salal	Douglas Aster
Willow	Wild Strawberry
Woolly Sunflower	Yarrow
Hardhack	Mock Orange
Alder	Seablush
Native Grasses	Spring Gold

Why add native plants to your garden?

Native plants are attractive, drought tolerant, adapted to our climate and relatively easy to maintain. They also support native wildlife and insect populations and can help combat the challenges of habitat loss. No matter what your personal garden style is, there's native plants that can work for you.

Are all non native plants bad?

No! non-native non-invasive plants can be beneficial in your garden, the removal of invasive plants from your garden should definitely be a priority though. Garden thugs like English Ivy, Periwinkle, Yellow archangel and Himalayan Blackberry often escape cultivation and spread into community greenspaces suppressing native plant growth and becoming difficult to eradicate once established.

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YOU CAN HELP MAKE THE TOWN OF COMOX A POLLINATOR PARADISE!

Insect populations are globally in decline and need your help! You can act now and take small steps in your own garden to help support native pollinators.

TOWN OF COMOX

STEP 1: CHOOSE A SITE

Pick a spot in your garden that gets plenty of sun, shady sites can work too but most pollinators are more active in the sunshine.

Choose a spot that is easily accessible for watering, all plants will benefit from some water in the first years to help them get established.

Remember to start out small, it's easier to add to your garden later than to start to big and become discouraged, even a small planting in a pot can be a pollinator oasis.

Pollinators like native bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, wasps and flies carry pollen from the male parts of the flower to the female parts of the same or another flower. For plants to become fertilized and produce fruit and seeds pollination must occur.

Pollinators are essential to the production of approximately 1/3 of our food supply and approximately 75% of flowering plants rely on animals to assist in fertilization.

Insect populations are facing numerous threats including habitat loss from urban sprawl, pesticides use, climate change, and the introduction of invasive species.

STEP 2: MAKE A DESIGN PLAN

Designing your garden doesn't need to be a big chore or have all the details, it can be as simple as laying out a garden hose in the desired shape of your bed to help you visualize your new planting area. Pay attention to the type of soil and moisture levels in your planting area, this will help you choose the best plants for your site.

Some ideas to incorporate into your pollinator garden:

Leaving some ground bare for ground nesting bees

Flat rocks for sun basking butterflies

Adding logs, leaves and hollow stems for cavity nesting bees.

Providing a small area for mudding for butterflies

STEP 3: PREPARE THE AREA

The best time of year to plant a garden is in early spring or fall while temperatures are mild, if your garden is going to be in an area that has lawn the turf will need to be removed before planting.

This can be done in a few ways:

Manually dig or rent a sod cutter.

Cover the turf with cardboard and top with soil

Cover the area with a tarp and let the sun cook the grass (this can take a long time)

STEP 4: TIME TO SHOP!

What to look for:

Native plants that are suited to your growing conditions.

Choose a variety of bloom times to provide blooms from spring to fall.

Be sure to include host plants for butterflies.

Select a variety of plant heights and flower shapes to attract different insects.

Consider adding native shrubs or trees if you have the space.

STEP 5: GET READY TO PLANT!

Some tips to help with design:

Lay out all your plants in your newly prepped area before you begin planting.

Be sure to arrange plants by height, with shorter plants in the front.

Massing plants of the same variety together will also help attract more pollinators to your garden.

STEP 6: MY GARDEN IS PLANTED, NOW HOW DO I MAINTAIN IT?

Water your garden weekly through the first growing season to help plants become established.

Leave the leaves in place in fall to provide protection for overwintering insects.

Leave the seed heads to provide food for birds.

Leave the stems intact or put into small piles, stem nesting bees may be overwintering there.

Avoid using any pesticides or herbicides in your garden.

ENJOY THE INSECTS AND BIRDS THAT ARE MAKING YOUR GARDEN THEIR HOME.

Bee City Annual Report

TOWN OF COMOX

POLLINATOR TEAM INFORMATION

Primary Bee City Liaison:
Department/Role:
Email/Phone:
Pollinator Team Members and Affiliations:

1. HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND CREATION

PROJECT NAME	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	DATE IMPLEMENTED	PARTNERS	NOTES OR OUTCOMES

2. EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

ACTIVITY OR MATERIAL	DESCRIPTION	AUDIENCE	DATE IMPLEMENTED	PARTNERS	ESTIMATED REACH / PARTICIPATION

3. CELEBRATION

EVENT	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	DATE	PARTNERS	ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE

4. SUPPORTING ACTIONS (POLICY REVIEW, STAFF TRAINING, ETC.)

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	DATE/ TIMELINE	LEAD DEPARTMENT	NOTES/ STATUS

5. METRICS SUMMARY

DESCRIPTION	COUNT
New pollinator gardens or plantings created	
Total number of plants planted	
Number of outreach materials distributed	
Number of events	
Total estimated number of residents engaged	

6. PHOTOS, MATERIALS, OR LINKS

SUPPORTING MATERIAL	DESCRIPTION

7. REFLECTIONS AND PLANS FOR NEXT YEAR

REFLECTION QUESTIONS	RESPONSES
Key accomplishments this year:	
Challenges or lessons learned:	
Planned initiatives for the coming year:	
Community response to pollinator-related activities:	
Ideas for improvement or next steps:	